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Title: PULSE WIDTH MODULATION SYSTEMS AND METHODS

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PULSE WIDTH MODULATION SYSTEMS AND METHODS

BACKGROUND

Pulse width modulation systems are commonly used in a wide variety of different applications, including wave generation, motor control, and anti-lock
5 braking systems. A typical pulse width modulation system produces a variable duty cycle at a fixed frequency. With respect to an ideal pulse train of rectangular pulses, the duty cycle is the ratio of the pulse duration to the pulse period. In many approaches, the duty cycle is specified by a digital input code, and the pulse width modulation system generates a train of pulses of fixed frequency with a
10 width proportional to the value of the digital input code.

Typical pulse width modulation systems are implemented by at least one counter, at least one magnitude comparator, and a high frequency clock. In some of these implementations, a comparator generates a pulse width modulation output based on a comparison between a reference count generated from a duty
15 cycle input code and a clock count generated from a clock signal. A clock divider may be used to generate the clock signal from a high-speed clock signal. The divide-by parameter of the clock divider may be varied to change the frequency of the pulse width modulation signal. The operating frequencies of these types of pulse width modulation systems often are limited by the delays inherent in the
20 counters and the magnitude comparators. In addition, propagation delays often make these designs highly sensitive to fabrication variations, reducing the manufacturability of these types of pulse width modulation systems.

SUMMARY

In one aspect of the invention, a pulse width modulation system includes a
25 register and a code word generator. The code word generator has an input for receiving a specified output frequency and a specified duty cycle and is operable to generate code words of different lengths. The code word generator is operable to generate a base code word having a length set to achieve the specified output frequency and having a thermometer code value set in accordance with the
30 specified duty cycle. The code word generator is further operable to load the

register with a code word pattern including a sequence of one or more copies of the base code word.

In another aspect, the invention features a pulse width modulation method in accordance with which a specified output frequency and a specified duty cycle are received. The specified output frequency is selected from a set of multiple available output frequencies and the specified duty cycle is selected from a set of multiple available duty cycles. In response to the specified output frequency and the specified duty cycle, a base code word is generated. The base code word has a length set to achieve the specified output frequency and has a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle. A code word pattern that includes a sequence of one or more copies of the base code word is generated.

Other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description, including the drawings and the claims.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a pulse width modulation system.

FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of an embodiment of a pulse width modulation method.

FIG. 3 is a diagrammatic view of three instances of a register loaded with three different code word patterns in accordance with the method of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a diagrammatic view of two instances of a register loaded with two different code word patterns in accordance with the method of FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an implementation of the pulse width modulation system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 6 is a flow diagram of an embodiment of a pulse width modulation method that is implemented by the pulse width modulation system of FIG. 5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, like reference numbers are used to identify like elements. Furthermore, the drawings are intended to illustrate major features of exemplary embodiments in a diagrammatic manner. The drawings are not

intended to depict every feature of actual embodiments nor relative dimensions of the depicted elements, and are not drawn to scale.

The pulse width modulation embodiments described in detail below simultaneously control the duty cycle and the output frequency of pulse width modulation output signals through the generation of specially-coded code word patterns that may be output from a register serially to produce variable frequency, variable duty cycle pulse width modulation signals. In this way, these embodiments avoid the delays and the signal propagation sensitivity often associated with pulse width modulation systems that rely on separate components, such as clock dividers and comparators, to vary the pulse width modulation frequency and to set the pulse width modulation duty cycle.

FIG. 1 shows an embodiment of a pulse width modulation system 10 that includes a register 12 and a code word generator 14. The register 12 is a shift register that has a parallel input 16 and a serial output 18. The register 12 typically is a wide shift register that has a sufficient number of bits to accommodate a maximum number of available output frequencies and a maximum duty cycle resolution. In the illustrated embodiment, the register 12 includes a serial input 20 that is connected to the serial output 18 by a feedback loop 22. The code word generator 14 is not limited to any particular hardware or software configuration, but rather it may be implemented in any computing or processing environment, including in digital electronic circuitry or in computer hardware, firmware, or software.

FIG. 2 shows an embodiment of a method that is implemented by the pulse width modulation system 10 to generate a variable frequency, variable duty cycle pulse width modulation output signal 24.

The code word generator 14 receives a specified output frequency 26 that is selected from a set of multiple available output frequencies (block 28). The output frequency 26 may be specified in a variety of different implementation-specific ways. For example, the output frequency 26 may be specified by a digital code word value or by a single input parameter value. In some implementations, each of the available output frequencies is a respective fraction of the frequency (f_{CLK}) of the clock signal 31 that is applied to the register 12.

The code word generator 14 also receives a specified duty cycle 30 that is selected from a set of multiple available duty cycles (block 32). Like the output frequency 26, the duty cycle 30 may be specified in a variety of different implementation-specific ways. For example, in some implementations, the duty cycle is specified by a K-bit binary code word, where K has an integer value of at least one, which corresponds to the resolution with which the duty cycle 30 is specified.

In response to the specified output frequency 26 and the specified duty cycle 30, the code word generator 14 generates a base code word that has a length that is set to achieve the specified output frequency and that has a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle 30 (block 34). In some implementations, the base code word length is set based on the resolution with which the duty cycle is specified. For example, if the duty cycle resolution is K, the base code word length is 2^K bits. The thermometer code is a well known encoding scheme in which $2^L - 1$ digital inputs are used to represent 2^L digital words, where L has an integer value of at least one. The following conversion table sets forth the conversions between decimal, binary, and thermometer code words for decimal values ranging from 0 to 7.

Decimal	Binary			Thermometer Code						
	b_1	b_2	b_3	t_1	t_2	t_3	t_4	t_5	t_6	t_7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
5	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table: Conversions between decimal, binary and thermometer codes.

Referring to FIG. 3, in one illustrative example, assume that the duty cycle resolution is three bits (i.e., $2^3 = 8$ possible duty cycle values), the specified duty cycle is $5/8$ (i.e., 62.5%), and the number of available output frequencies for the pulse width modulation signal 24 is three. The available output frequencies (f_{OUT1} , f_{OUT2} , f_{OUT3}) correspond to fractions of the register clocking frequency f_{CLK} . In this example, the output frequencies are given by $f_{OUTj} = f_{CLK}/2^{K+j-1}$ where K is the duty cycle resolution (i.e., 3 in this example), $j = 1, \dots, M$, and M is equal to the number of available output frequencies (i.e., 3 in this example).

If the specified output frequency is f_{OUT1} (i.e., $j = 1$), the code word generator 14 generates the base code word "00011111", which has a length of $2^{K+j-1} = 2^3 = 8$ bits and has a thermometer code value corresponding to the duty cycle value of 5 (i.e., "101" in binary code). If the specified output frequency is f_{OUT2} (i.e., $j = 2$), the code word generator 14 generates the base code word "0000001111111111", which has a length of $2^{K+j-1} = 2^4 = 16$ bits and has a thermometer code value corresponding to the duty cycle value of 5 (i.e., "101" in binary code). If the specified output frequency is f_{OUT3} (i.e., $j = 3$), the code word generator 14 generates the base code word "00000000000011111111111111111111", which has a length of $2^{K+j-1} = 2^5 = 32$ bits and has a thermometer code value corresponding to the duty cycle value of 5 (i.e., "101" in binary code).

Referring back to FIG. 2, the code word generator 14 generates a code word pattern that includes enough copies of the base code word to completely load the bits of the register 12 (block 36). The code word generator 14 loads the generated code word pattern into the register 12 (block 37). In the above-described example, if the specified output frequency is f_{OUT1} , the code word generator 14 loads the 32-bit wide register 12 with a code word pattern 38 that consists of four copies 40, 42, 44, 46 of the 8-bit base code word "00011111". If the specified output frequency is f_{OUT2} , the code word generator 14 loads the 32-bit wide register 12 with a code word pattern 48 that consists of two copies 50, 52 of the 16-bit base code word "0000001111111111". If the specified output frequency is f_{OUT3} , the code word generator 14 loads the 32-bit wide register 12 with a code word pattern 54 that consists of one copy 56 of the 32-bit base code word "00000000000011111111111111111111".

Referring to FIG. 4, in another illustrative example, assume that the duty cycle resolution is 5 bits (i.e., $2^5 = 32$ possible duty cycle values) and the specified duty cycle is 17/32 (i.e., 53.125%). In this example, the register 12 is assumed to have a width of 32 bits and, therefore, only one output frequency (f_{OUT1}) is possible for the pulse width modulation signal 24. The output frequency is given by $f_{OUT1} = f_{CLK}/2^{K+j-1}$. In this example, $K = 5$ and $j = 1$, resulting in $f_{OUT1} = f_{CLK}/32$. The code word generator 14 generates the base code word “000000000000000111111111111111”, which has a length of $2^{K+j-1} = 2^5 = 32$ bits and has a thermometer code value corresponding to the duty cycle value of 17 (i.e., “01001” in 5-bit binary code). The code word generator 14 loads the 32-bit wide register 12 with a code word pattern 58 that consists of one copy 60 of the 32-bit base code word “000000000000000111111111111111”.

In some implementations, if the specified output frequency is greater than the threshold $f_{CLK}/32$, the code word generator 14 is operable to reduce the duty cycle resolution K to achieve the specified output frequency. In some of these implementations, the code word generator 14 reduces the duty cycle resolution from K to $K-h$ to achieve an output frequency $f_{CLK}/2^{K-h+j-1}$, where h has an integer value ranging from 1 to $K-1$. In the example of FIG. 4, $K = 5$ and $j = 1$ and, therefore, the possible output frequencies higher than $f_{CLK}/32$ are given by $f_{CLK}/2^{5-h}$, where h corresponds to the number of bits by which the duty cycle resolution is reduced. In the example shown in FIG. 4, the duty cycle resolution is reduced by one bit (i.e., $h = 1$) to achieve the higher output frequency $f'_{OUT1} = f_{CLK}/16$. The code word generator 14 generates the base code word “0000000011111111”, which has a length of $2^{K-h+j-1} = 2^4 = 16$ bits and has a thermometer code value corresponding to a duty cycle resolution of $17/2 = 8.5$ (i.e., 1001.1 in 5-bit binary code) truncated at the radix to approximate the 4-bit duty cycle resolution. The code word generator 14 loads the 32-bit wide register 12 with a code word pattern 62 that consists of two copies 64, 66 of the base code word “000000000000000111111111111111”.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 1, the code word generator 14 loads the generated code word pattern into the register 12 once for a given specified duty cycle 30 and output frequency 26. After the code word pattern has been loaded, the register 12 outputs the code word pattern serially from output 18. The

output bits are fed back to the serial input 20, allowing the register to continue to generate the pulse width modulation output signal 24 without re-loading the code word pattern from the code word generator 14. In this regard, the code word generator 14 generates register control signals 68 from control data 70 received from an external source. The register control signals 68 control the parallel loading of the code word pattern and the serial loading of the pulse width modulation output signal 24 fed back from the output 18 to the serial input 20. In other embodiments, the code word generator 14 may be configured to continuously load bits into the register 12 serially to replace the bits that are shifted out to produce the pulse width modulation output signal 24.

FIG. 5 shows an implementation 80 of the pulse width modulation system 10 in which the code word generator 14 is implemented by a decoder 82 and control logic 84. In some implementations, the duty cycle 30 is specified by a K-bit binary word and the decoder 82 decodes the binary word into a 2^K -bit thermometer code word (e.g., if the duty cycle code word is "101", the decoder 82 decodes the duty cycle code word into "00011111"), where K has an integer value of 1 to N, and N has an integer value corresponding to the maximum number of input bit lines to the decoder 82.

The decoder 82 may be any type of binary-to-thermometer-code decoder and the control logic 84 may be any type of logic processing architecture that is configured to provide the functionality described below. The decoder 82 and the control logic 84 are not limited to any particular hardware or software configuration, but rather they may be implemented in any computing or processing environment, including in digital electronic circuitry or in computer hardware, firmware, or software.

Referring to FIG. 6, in some implementations, the pulse width modulation system implementation 80 generates the pulse width modulation output signal 24, as follows. The decoder 82 receives the specified duty cycle 30 with a resolution of K bits (block 86). The decoder 82 decodes the specified duty cycle into a thermometer-coded code word (block 88). The control logic 84 receives the specified output frequency 26, which is selected from the set of $f_{OUT} = f_{CLK}/2^{K+j-1}$, where $j = 1, \dots, M$, and M has an integer value equal to the total number of available frequencies (block 90). The control logic 84 generates a base code word

by duplicating each bit of the thermometer code word received from the decoder 82 2^{j-1} times to produce a 2^{k+j-1} -bit base code word encoded with a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle (block 92).

Thus, in the example described above in connection with FIG. 3, where
 5 $k = j = 3$ and the duty cycle code word is “101”, the decoder 82 converts the duty cycle code word to “00011111” (block 88). If the specified output frequency corresponds to $j = 1$ (i.e., $f_{OUT1} = f_{CLK}/2^3$), the control logic 84 generates a base code word $2^0 = 1$ times to produce a 2^3 -bit code word encoded with a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle (i.e., “00011111”) (block
 10 92). If the specified output frequency corresponds to $j = 2$ (i.e., $f_{OUT2} = f_{CLK}/2^4$), the control logic 84 generates a base code word $2^1 = 2$ times to produce a 2^4 -bit code word encoded with a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle (i.e., “0000001111111111”) (block 92). If the specified output frequency corresponds to $j = 3$ (i.e., $f_{OUT3} = f_{CLK}/2^5$), the control logic 84 generates a
 15 base code word $2^2 = 4$ times to produce a 2^5 -bit code word encoded with a thermometer code value set in accordance with the specified duty cycle (i.e., “00000000000011111111111111111111”) (block 92).

After the base code word has been generated (block 92), a code word pattern 94 is generated by replicating the base code word 2^{M-j} times to produce a
 20 sequence of 2^{M-j} copies of the base code word (block 96). Again considering the example described above in connection with FIG. 3, if $j = 1$ the control logic 84 replicates the base code word “00011111” $2^2 = 4$ times to produce a sequence of four copies of the base code word. If $j = 2$, the control logic 84 replicates the base code word “0000001111111111” $2^1 = 2$ times to produce a sequence of two copies
 25 of the base code word. If $j = 3$, the control logic 84 replicates the base code word “00011111” $2^0 = 1$ times to produce a sequence of one copies of the base code word.

After the code word pattern 94 has been generated (block 96), the control logic 84 loads the code word pattern into register 12, which has at least 2^{N+M-1} bits
 30 (block 98).

Other embodiments are within the scope of the claims.